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ABSTRACT

Leadership is an interpersonal influence, exercised in a given situation and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals. Good leadership is the significant factor which makes compensatory schools effective. In order to improve instruction, superintendents, school boards and principals should: (1) develop a positive attitude toward compensatory education and the students that it attempts to serve; (2) understand and appreciate cultural pluralism and be committed to the goal of helping each student to succeed in school; (3) encourage schools to develop a shared leadership style in which various administrators and teachers work collaboratively as a team to achieve the agreed-upon goals of the school; (4) initiate an ongoing process of staff development to help the team members accomplish their tasks more effectively; (5) develop the strategies and flexibility to help students, teachers and administrators fulfill the institutions' expectations; and (6) marshal the available resources to achieve the group's goals. (PS)

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The Role of Leadership in Compensatory Schools

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This paper will discuss briefly the following three topics:

1. What Is Leadership?
2. Role of Leaders in Effective Schools
3. The Role of Leadership in Compensatory Schools

I. What Is Leadership?

The concept of leadership is complex, ambiguous and multi-dimensional (Pfeffer, 1978). Hence, there have been many definitions of leadership depending on the vantage point of view of various scholars. Leadership has been defined: "(a) as a dynamic process in which leaders and followers work toward a common goal, (b) as a part of a group process, (c) as an art, (d) as a given situation and (e) as an act to create change" (Steinmo, 1984, p. 8). For this paper, leadership is defined as "interpersonal influence, exercised in situation and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals" (Tannenbaum, Weschler & Massarik, 1961, p. 24) or more simply defined, leadership is "getting the job done through people" (Thompson, 1983). While the effective manager is viewed as the person who does things right, the effective leader is seen as the person who does the right things. The literature on leadership describes the traits and characteristics of effective leaders, the skills and behaviors of such leaders, their styles of leadership and the situational theory of leadership which underscores the fit between the particular leadership style in a particular situation

(Fiedler, 1967). Leadership styles are usually contrasted not only in terms of decision-making but also in terms of the leader's view of employees, task orientation, human relations and specific tendencies. Theory X, Y and Z were advanced to describe certain leadership styles. Leaders adhering to theory X believe that people do not work hard, do not care about the organization and need to be motivated by rewards and punishment. Administrators holding to theory Y assert that people are self-motivated toward goals, responsible, desirous of making contributions to their organization and need only a facilitator to promote their efforts. Those who espouse theory Z believe in the system of the Japanese quality circles of involving workers from the bottom to the top to enhance productivity by cultivating trust, subtlety and intimacy* (Ouchi, 1981).

Participatory leadership is probably related to follower satisfaction and cohesiveness, but group productivity has not been shown to be consistently related to either participatory or authoritarian leadership (Stogdill, 1974). Leaders may come from the rank of those appointed to positions of authority and may also emerge from the group. Leadership may be a shared process, manifested by one or more persons in the group. All members may in fact act in certain leadership behaviors in varying degrees at different times and situations. The management team idea in schools became a well-accepted notion in the literature.

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*Subtlety is knowing the personalities of workers and getting them to work harmoniously together and intimacy is caring for others and a sense of community.

Traditionally, principals and central office administrators have tended to spend a small amount of their time on the teaching and learning activities and more of their time on various maintenance and managerial tasks (March, 1978; Hannaway & Sproull, 1979) even though most of them believe in the importance of the instructional program. When principals are able to focus on instructional effectiveness, they tend to play a big role in school improvement.

II. Role of Leaders in Effective Schools

Effective schools research, according to Lipham (1981, p. 13), indicates that principals of effective schools

- are committed to instructional improvement
- show strong knowledge of and participation in classroom instructional activities
- monitor the affective use of classroom time
- engage in affective instructional improvement processes
- have positive attitudes toward their staff and students

Bossert's (1983, p. 25) conclusion from the recent literature is that effective principals tend to

- emphasize achievement by setting instructional goals . . .
- devote more time to the coordination and control of intruction
- have more skill in instructional matters
- project more power than other principals especially in decision-making involving curriculum and instruction
- have influence in the mobilization of district support and involvement in the school's instructional plans
- foster structured learning environments with few disciplinary problems and buffer classrooms from interruptions by stressing discipline and relieving teachers of paper-work
- know community power structures and maintain appropriate relations with parents

Hence, effective administrators provide a clear vision for their school, initiative and skills in the instructional program, cooperative processes of planning, communicating and decision-making, high academic expectations and resourcefulness to achieve and measure pupil progress. Therefore, the administrator's role should not be confined to the maintenance function of managing the school to keep it afloat but must be extended to the role of a change agent where flexibility, creativity and exploration of new alternatives to educating children are an integral part of the school plan. All effective administrators are not alike. Some emphasize a special behavior such as being the organizer, the juggler, the helper, the broker, the humanist, the catalyst, the rationalist or the politician indicating that there are many approaches to being an effective principal (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980).

Superintendent and central staff administrators can initiate and carry out innovative programs within a district by linking and coordinating the efforts of all schools.

Now that we have underscored the key role of the site and central office administrators in effective schools, several cautions are in order. First, many studies of administrators are based on direct observations or are correlational in nature, hence, there is an absence of evidence linking causally certain crucial administrator behaviors with positive school outcomes. Second, principals may be a key factor in school improvement but they are not the "superheroes" some made them out to be. They could not do the whole task alone. There are others such as teachers, supervisors, department chairpersons, vice-principals and parent volunteers that often constitute a leadership team working toward instructional improvement.

Third, we need to learn more about the external and internal forces and conditions that enhance or hinder school improvement and distinguish among the various contexts of educational change.

Let us turn our attention briefly to the obstacles administrators usually encounter in paying appropriate attention to the instructional program. Based on a comprehensive review of the literature, Leithwood and Montgomery (1982) advanced the following five areas that consume much of the principal's time: (a) teacher related issues such as low skills and motivation and issues relevant to collective bargaining, (b) ambiguity and complexity of the principal's role and responsibilities, (c) lack of the principal's vision, knowledge, skills and the unwillingness to take risks, (d) district related problems such as poor communication, inadequate resources, loose or rigid relationships with instructional programs, and (e) community related problems such as pressure groups and excessive friction in the community about educational matters.

The major reasons given by principals for being unable to grant their instructional programs sufficient attention are "lack of administrative staff, the need to be visible to students, emergencies, crisis management, discipline problems, immediate ongoing needs of people and . . . the paper bureaucracy" (NASSP, 1983).

III. The Role of Leadership in Compensatory Schools

While the family and home environment of poor children may have some influence on their academic achievement, the school has a strong responsibility and role to play in their educational progress. This writer rejects the premise that the low achievement of poor children is

attributable solely to their family background because research has shown that dramatic improvements in the school performance of poor children have occurred when certain conditions existed.

Weber (1971) studied four successful inner city schools: two of them were in New York City, one was in Kansas City and the fourth was in Los Angeles. He found that all of these schools had strong leadership, high expectations for their children, positive atmosphere, emphasis on reading and evaluation of student achievement.

The State of New York Study (1974) focused on two high-achieving and low-achieving inner New York City schools. Among the major findings were that the high-achieving school had an administrative team that exerted a definite impact on instruction, management and progress of the school. The teachers in the effective school were more positive about their influence on the education of their students.

The California School Effectiveness Study (1977) examined 21 high-achieving and 21 low-achieving elementary schools in the state to determine the factors that may have distinguished between these two groups of schools. Among the major findings were that in effective schools, principals were directive and gave their teachers substantial support, teachers were task-oriented, the school atmosphere tended to enhance learning, and adult volunteers and additional materials helped enrich the school.

Brookover and Lezotte (1977) studied 8 Michigan schools, 6 of which were improving and 2 were declining to find the major differences between the two sets of schools as they relate to student achievement. They found, among other things, that the effective schools had assertive principals who

had high expectations of students and who took the responsibility to assess the achievement of instructional outcomes. Teachers in these schools had also high expectations and felt accountable for their students' achievement.

Edmonds and Frederiksen (1978) reanalyzed the 1966 Equal Opportunity Survey data and found that students' social class and family background did not distinguish between effective and ineffective schools.

Meyer, Gersten and Gutkin (1983) supplied evidence that focusing on academic instruction, in-service and pre-service training of teachers and a system of monitoring helped students in an elementary inner city school achieve at or near the national median on the Metropolitan Achievement Test. The students were involved in Project Follow Through at a school in the Ocean Hill Brownsville district of New York and the project was sponsored by the University of Oregon.

Project RISE (Rising to Individual Scholastic Excellence) was implemented in 20 Milwaukee schools. It emphasized the tenets of effective schooling (school climate, curriculum, instruction, coordination of support service, evaluation, parent and community support) and led to high improvement in mathematics and some improvement in reading (McCormack-Larkin & Kritek, 1982).

The Phi Delta Kappa Study of Exceptional Urban Elementary Schools focused on 8 effective inner city schools in the Midwest. In synthesizing these case studies, Gregory (1980) identified the crucial role of the principals as a key to the excellence of these schools. These principals provided the staff with the opportunity to share in decision-making and responsibility. The principals were empathetic, interested, concerned and

active. They set high expectations and stressed discipline. They exhibited skills in working in a political atmosphere within and outside the school.

As a part of this study, McCarthy (1980) analyzed 59 case studies of urban elementary schools and drew more evidence that these schools can be effective given the emphasis by the leadership on curriculum content, academic achievement, instructional strategies, staff development and financial and parent support.

The California State Department of Education studied effective compensatory education-funded schools "that received Title 1 or state compensatory education funds or both" during the 1979-80 and 1980-81 school years. Using the criteria for effective schools (strong leadership of principal, instructional effectiveness, positive school/classroom environment, continuous monitoring, parent, community and auxiliary staff support), 24 achieving compensatory education schools were identified. Teams of observers were sent to each school to disseminate data about each of the effective schools criteria to identify the factors that contribute to making each site an effective school. The visiting teams agreed that the site leadership behaviors that were instrumental in helping the school were:

- Ensuring the implementation of approve plans
- Obtaining parent/community support
- Ensuring that activities, content and methods are geared to the attainment of objectives
- Ensuring the coordination of all school programs
- Ensuring that auxiliary staff services are geared to program and student needs
- Ensuring an adequate evaluation program for compensatory education
- Ensuring that staff development needs are met
  (Effective Practices in Achieving Compensatory Education--Funded Schools, 1984, pp. 1-2)

In all of these studies, the role of leadership in school improvement, whether urban or suburban, is critically emphasized. Leadership contributes to setting goals, devising strategies, developing teams, making shared decisions, monitoring and assessing pupil progress. Leadership seems to infuse the school not only with the vision but with the positive climate, communication and support that are essential ingredients of a sense of ownership, enthusiasm, commitment and pride in achievement.

In order to enhance the process of instructional improvement, superintendents, school boards and principals should first develop a positive attitude toward compensatory education and the students that it attempts to serve. Second, they need to understand and appreciate cultural pluralism and be committed to the goal of helping each student to succeed in school. Third, schools should be encouraged to develop a shared leadership style in which various administrators and teachers work collaboratively as a team to achieve the agreed-upon goals of the school. Fourth, staff development should be an ongoing process to help the team members to accomplish their tasks more effectively. Fifth, leaders need to develop the strategies and flexibility to help students, teachers and administrators to move toward the achievement of the expectations they established for their institution. Sixth, leaders should marshal the resources available to support the achievement of the group's goals.

Permit me to add a final note. This writer contends that the "cultural differences" explanation for the variations in the degree of cognitive growth among children from minority groups is without research-based merit. Hence, leaders should replace the notion of cultural deprivation and deficit with the commitment for cultural pluralism and enrichment (Gezi,

1981) and affirm their school's responsibility to offer the best education for all children. Nyiti's (1982) research conducted with two Canadian groups, Europeans and Micmac Indian children, supports our contention. He found the two groups of children to have developed in similar fashion. When the two groups were interviewed by persons of the same culture and language, there were no significant differences between them in their performance. It is the thesis of this writer that where persons in leadership positions set the pace with respect to expectations and provisions for their attainment; where they make decisions that motivate and sustain student success, compensatory schools achieve. This finds further support in the California State Department of Education study, "Effective Practices in Achieving Compensatory Education Schools" (1985). The study concluded that

> . . . good schools are generally located in good districts--districts that set the pace with respect to standards; that provide opportunities for professional development; that follow-up on their schools and get involved in their school programs, and are proud of successes that their schools achieve (p. 36).

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